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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0538
INFO WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RHEHWSR/WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM WASHINGTON DC
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UNCLAS SANTO DOMINGO 000019

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL AMGT ASEC EAID DR HA
SUBJECT: DR-Haiti Border - Chaotic, But Functional

REF: 10 SANTO DOMINGO 92 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. (SBU) Summary: As of midday 1/17 a variety of American citizens working in the public hospital in the border town of Jimani report a disorganized yet functional situation in which hundreds of displaced Haitians seek, and generally receive, urgent medical assistance. Witnesses report that they have not seen signs of tension between the host population and displaced people. There is an unconfirmed rumor of a Dominican businessman killed in a relief convoy in Haiti. Key challenges appear to be poorly-organized assistance and resupply efforts. According to one Amcit on the scene, a growing concern is that Haitian displaced have nowhere to go after receiving treatment. The road to Port-au-Prince from Jimani was reportedly passable, though there were 'bottlenecks' caused by relief traffic. End summary.

Displaced Receiving Health Care, With Delays

¶2. (SBU) Amcit witnesses in the Jimani public hospital reported that as of midday on 1/17 a steady flow of displaced Haitians were being treated by doctors and nurses from the Dominican Health Ministry (CESPAS) as well as Haitian and international health care providers. There were reports of delays in the provision of care - one source cited a young girl with a serious head wound who waited four hours for treatment - but the IOM representative in Jimani said the hospital was not hopelessly overtaxed.

¶3. (SBU) Witnesses also reported that nurses were carefully managing supplies of scarce commodities, like saline, but that bottled water was widely available. Resupply efforts by local authorities, GoDR entities, and relief workers were reportedly disorganized and infrequent; Amcit witnesses characterized the relief effort in Jimani as poorly coordinated. One witness cited a strong need for Haitian-Creole translators.

Road to Port-au-Prince Open; DR Entries Steady; Some Enter Haiti

¶4. (SBU) The route to Port-au-Prince was reportedly passable, though bottlenecks due to relief traffic were creating delays of up to an hour at the border crossing point, and disorganized relief convoys were creating further delays. The IOM rep in Jimani reported that the GoDR civil defense forces were providing security for twice-daily runs to Port-au-Prince at 8:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

local time, though they usually ran late.

¶ 15. (SBU) Sources characterized the daily flow of approximately 500 migrants across the border as steady. Some of these migrants may be normally resident in the Dominican Republic and are returning from checking on family in Haiti. The IOM rep in Jimani said that she was hearing reports that the crossings at Dajabon and Pedernales were calm. She also said she was seeing a flow of travelers into Haiti, as some successfully treated victims return to Haiti and as Dominican residents of Haitian origin head to Haiti in search of missing relatives. (Note: some IOM sources say the flow from the DR to Haiti is greater than the flow in the opposite direction. End note.)

No Tension Evident in Jimani; Rumor of Attack on Dominican Relief Team

¶ 16. (SBU) Though Amcit witnesses in the Jimani hospital said they were not seeing signs of tension between displaced persons and the local population, there were persistent rumors, repeated by Amcit witnesses and the IOM rep in Jimani, that a Dominican businessman who had organized a relief convoy was killed in Haiti as well as another one wounded.

¶ 17. (U) Minimize considered.
Lambert